



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex
9500 Thornton Avenue
Newark, California 94560



April 17, 2008

Blue Ribbon Task Force
Marine Life Protection Act Initiative
MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov

Dear Chair Golding and Members of the Blue Ribbon Task Force:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex, manages the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge. In addition to managing the Farallon NWR, our staff is involved with monitoring and management of several important seabird nesting colonies along the California coast. Gerry McChesney of our staff is also involved with the establishment of Marine Protected Areas as an expert on marine birds. This letter is intended to stress the importance we see of implementing Special Closures in this region particularly around the Farallon NWR.

We would like the BRTF to include the following Special Closures in the packages to be forwarded to the Fish and Game Commission (Commission). Of the 100 seabird colonies identified in the study region, we believe 4 colony complexes should be included: Farallon Islands, Drakes Bay, Point Reyes, Devil's Slide as listed in the chart below. We believe that the closure distance at these sites should follow the recommendation as provided in the following summary and should be year-round.

<u>Colony Complex</u>	<u>Recommended distance</u>	<u>Package</u>
Farallon Islands		
• Southeast Farallon Island	300 ft	1-3, 4
• North Farallon Island	1000 ft	1-3, 4
• Isle of St. James	300 ft	1-3, 2-XA, 4
Drakes Bay complex		
• Point Resistance	300 ft*	2-XA
• Stormy Stack	300 ft	1-3, 2-XA, 4
Point Reyes complex		
• Point Reyes Headland	1000 ft	1-3, 4
Devil's Slide/Point San Pedro		
• Devil's Slide Rock (Egg Rock)	1000 ft	1-3, 4

* Note: We recommend the distance at Point Resistance as identified in proposal 2-XA, with a modification to the shape from a circle to a square.

Since state marine reserves are proposed at the North and Southeast Farallon Islands in all packages, Special Closure concerns have focused on ecotourism access and navigation/safety. Packages 1-3, 2XA, and 4 recommend maintaining existing speed and noise restrictions and address ecotourism and navigation/safety at Southeast Farallon Island by leaving two areas completely open: Fisherman's Bay and East Landing. The area between these two places contains the largest Common murre colony on the entire island. Hence, we support the Special Closure design in proposals 1-3 and 4 which protects this area and includes it within the closure. We believe it is very important to provide responsible access to allow the public the opportunity to experience these large colonies of sea birds and marine mammals. It is our understanding that the main ecotourism operators in this area have been consulted and the majority have voiced approval of this option. Balancing navigation concerns at the North Island / Isle of St. James with critical habitat needs of the ESA listed Steller sea lion has resulted in cross-interest support for a 1000 ft Special Closure at the North Island and only a 300 ft closure around the Isle of St. James as proposed in packages 1-3 and 4.

Thank you for your consideration of our request for Special Closures. If you have any questions, please contact me at (510) 792-0222.

Sincerely,



Acting

Manager, San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge
Complex

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